

## PART II

## Population

Where Washington's People Live

Because of the influences of topography, climate, accessibility and recent industrialization, Washington's population is distributed unevenly throughout the state. Over two-thirds of the people live in the western portion, concentrated largely in the industrial cities of Puget Sound. The Olympic Mountains and Willapa Hills of the Coast Range and the Cascade Mountains stand out as sparsely populated areas in western Washington. The Willamette-Puget Sound Lowland, extending from Vancouver on the Columbia River northward to Bellingham near the Canadian border, is the major population belt of the state. It contains a fairly well-distributed rural population on its river deltas and rolling, glacial drift plains.

The mountains, hills, plateaus, irrigable valleys and dry climatic conditions cause a generally clustered pattern of population settlement in eastern Washington. Mountainous areas including the eastern Cascade Mountain slope, the Okanogan Highlands, the Blue Mountains and the Selkirks have but few people. Dryland and upland areas which cannot be irrigated, such as large portions of the Waterville Plateau, the Channelled Scablands and the hills of Yakima County, are thinly settled. Both rural and urban population is concentrated in the irrigated Yakima, Kittitas, Wenatchee, Okanogan and Walla Walla Valleys and in the Pasco and Quincy Basins. In the far eastern section--the Palouse Hills--the uniform soil, topography and moderate rainfall permits a more evenly distributed population. The industrialized Spokane metropolitan area and the rich agricultural Yakima Valley are the major population clusters of eastern Washington.

Growth of Population

Washington was explored by Spanish, Russian, British and American expeditions between 1592 and 1805, but no settlement occurred until 1810. Ownership of the area was disputed by America and Great Britain. A compromise, the Joint Occupancy Treaty of 1818, permitted both American and British fur traders and settlers to live north of the Columbia River. British interests (the Northwest Company and the Hudson Bay Company) established fur trading posts at Spokane and Walla Walla in 1810 and 1818. American claims were strengthened by the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1805) and by the settlements at Fort Spokane, Okanogan and Astoria by the Pacific Fur Company. The British increased their influence as they established agricultural settlements at Fort Vancouver and Fort Nisqually between 1824 and 1833. Settlement by Americans north of the Columbia, although permitted by treaty, was discouraged by the Hudson Bay Company, which desired to maintain its fur trade monopoly.

A growing tide of American land settlers over the Oregon Trail during the 1840's changed the balance of control in favor of the United States. Most of the Americans settled in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. Unhindered by the British, several hundred American settlers moved northward across the Columbia into the Puget Sound country and soon outnumbered the British fur traders.

The conflict of interests was solved by the Oregon Treaty of 1846, which gave the United States the present area of Washington and established the Canadian boundary as it exists today. Oregon Territory (including all of the present state of Washington) was created in 1848 by Congress, with its capitol in Salem, Oregon. Settlers north of the Columbia met in 1851 at the Monticello Convention in present Longview, Washington, and asked for a separate territorial government. Washington Territory was created March 2, 1851, with a capitol at Olympia on Puget Sound. Isaac I. Stevens was appointed as Governor.

Population growth was slow before 1860. Lack of roads, the long distance from the East, and the difficulty of clearing the dense forests of the Puget Sound country kept immigration to a minimum. Indian hostility prevented settlement in most of eastern Washington prior to 1858, and that tended to slow movement into the Puget Sound Basin. The Washington population was only 11,594 according to the 1860 Census.

In 1863, the Washington territorial boundaries were changed to the present state lines by the creation of Idaho Territory. The Census of 1870 was the first to follow the present boundaries, and it enumerated a population of 23,995.

Population grew rapidly from 1870 to 1890. New transcontinental railroads brought large waves of immigrants from the East and Europe. The completion of the Union Pacific to the Columbia River brought new settlers into southeastern Washington. When the Northern Pacific reached Spokane in 1880 and was continued on toward Puget Sound, settlers occupied the Palouse and Big Bend wheat lands and the Yakima Valley. In 1883, six new counties were created in eastern Washington. Expansion of coastwise shipping and lumbering built up the cities on Puget Sound and at Grays Harbor. Washington Territory was admitted to the Union as a state in 1889. The population at this time was 350,000.

The period 1900-1910 was a decade of rapid growth in which the state gained 624,000 persons, more than doubling to 1,141,990. Two other railroads, Great Northern and Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul reached Puget Sound in 1893 and 1909, respectively. The lumber industry and agriculture supported more people; land and timber seekers homesteaded free public domain lands in the mountainous areas. The Alaskan gold rush doubled Seattle's population within a decade. Railroads and ships brought large numbers of people from Europe who took up lumbering, fishing, mining and agriculture. Ranked numerically according to the 1920 Census, the largest foreign-born groups in the state were Canadians (42,000), Swedes (35,000), Norwegians (31,000), English (23,000), Germans (22,000), Italians (18,000), Finns (12,500), Russians (11,000) and Irish (9,000).

Between 1910 and 1940 population grew at a slower but steady rate. The increase was about 20,000 per year. The lumber industry began to decline after 1929. Reduced employment and a growing scarcity of land were reflected in a slower rate of population growth. However, during the 1930's, many farmers from the Great Plains drought areas moved overland to Washington seeking farming opportunities.

The 1940-1950 decade brought the greatest increase in Washington history. Primarily an overland movement of laborers to new defense industries, it resulted in an increase of 642,772 in ten years, raising the state population to 2,378,963 in 1950. Most of the new growth was in the industrial metropolitan districts in King, Pierce, Kitsap, Clark and Spokane Counties and at the Federal atomic works in Benton County.

### Urban and Rural Population

In 1870 the entire population of Washington was living in rural areas—in villages and on farms. By 1900, 211,477 of the population of Washington, or 40.8 percent, were living in urban areas. In 1950, according to the Census definition of "urban" which includes residents of towns of 2,500 and larger, 1,503,166 persons, or 63.2 percent, were living in urban areas. And over 52 percent lived in three standard metropolitan areas comprised of Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane and their surrounding suburban cities and towns. This trend follows the national pattern.

Table 1.—Population of Washington  
1860-1955

Year	Population
1860	11,594
1870	23,955
1880	75,116
1890	357,232
1900	518,103
1910	1,141,990
1920	1,356,621
1930	1,563,396
1940	1,736,191
1950	2,378,963
1955	2,580,000

Sources: U.S. Census, Population;  
Washington State Census  
Board, April 1, 1955  
Estimate.

Bellingham (35,700), Everett (43,100), Bremerton (32,200), Walla Walla (25,400) and Longview (23,500).

The rural population is predominantly rural nonfarm, consisting of 602,026 persons who live in the country, but do not operate farms. The rural farm population decreased about one-fifth between 1940 and 1950, and numbered only 273,771 or 11.5 percent of the state's total 1950 population of 2,378,963. As a result of the farm-to-city trend in Washington, about one person in ten is living on a farm and about six persons out of ten are living in a town or city larger than 2,500.

According to the 1955 estimate of the Washington Census Board, the ten leading cities of Washington ranked as follows: Seattle (555,000), Spokane (182,000), Tacoma (156,000), Yakima (43,000), Vancouver (41,950),

### Population of Skamania County

Skamania County's population has grown through four major influences since the first Census in 1860. The first growth period between 1870 and 1880 was a result of increased interest in agriculture and lumbering. One of the direct causes of increased settlement was the availability of timber and land grants under the Homestead Act of 1862. Increase in population between 1890 and 1910 resulted from fruit growing, lumber manufacturing and increased river navigation. Construction of Bonneville Dam during the late 1930's caused the third period of rapid growth. In recent years an expanding lumber industry and development of Gifford Pinchot National Forest has resulted in a continuing

increase of population. The county reached a new peak of approximately 5,200 persons in 1955.

All of Skamania County's population is classed as rural by the U. S. Census but about one-half is rural nonfarm. Rural-farm population in 1950 was only 925 or about 19 percent of total population. More recent estimates in 1958 place the combined numbers of people in North Bonneville and Stevenson, the county's only incorporated places, at 1,430. Skamania has no urban population, because by Census definition, an urban place is a village or city exceeding 2,500 persons. Population is very sparse in ratio to total land area because of the extensive area in the Cascade Mountains. About 70 percent of the county area is within Gifford Pinchot National Forest. The population density is only three persons per square mile contrasted with seven persons per square mile in neighboring Klickitat County. However, the inhabitants are rather concentrated, living largely along the Columbia River.

Table 2.- Population of Skamania County  
1860-1955

Census Year	Population	Percent Rural	Percent Urban
1860	173	100	0
1870	133	100	0
1880	809	100	0
1890	774	100	0
1900	1,688	100	0
1910	2,887	100	0
1920	2,357	100	0
1930	2,891	100	0
1940	4,633	100	0
1950	4,788	100	0
1955	5,200	100	0

Source: U. S. Census, Population

Table 3.- Population of Incorporated Places  
Skamania County, 1910-1958

Incorporated City or Town	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1958 <sup>1/</sup>
No. Bonneville	--	--	--	643	564	675
Stevenson	387	348	400	563	584	753

<sup>1/</sup> Populations for 1958 are estimates of the Washington State Census Board.

Sources: U. S. Census, Population.  
Washington State Census Board.

North Bonneville was constructed in 1933 at the site of the former village of Cascades. The population declined during the 1940's but the estimated 675 in 1958 is higher than the 1940 total. Stevenson has grown steadily since

1940, although the town's population remained steady at about 400 between 1910 and the middle 1930's. In 1958, Stevenson's population was estimated as 750. Two developments account for most of the population growth of the incorporated towns in recent years. First has been a rapid increase in logging and lumbering. Second is the increase in people who work in the metropolitan industrial areas on the lower Columbia River and live in Skamania County.

In addition to the incorporated places, there are several smaller unincorporated villages. Underwood is a fruit packing center in the White Salmon Valley. In the Wind River Valley, Carson is the major settlement. Other small towns and hamlets are: Cook, Skamania, Prindle, Mt. Pleasant and Home Valley.

Typical of many counties in the western United States, Skamania was settled by a mixture of immigrants from many states and foreign lands. In 1890 about one-fifth of the population was foreign-born. Canada, Germany, the Scandinavian countries and England have been the leading sources of people. Scandinavian and German immigration was largest in the 1900 to 1920 period. Canadian immigration was most important in the years after 1920 although German and Scandinavian immigration was almost as important. Only 5 percent of the population was foreign-born in 1950.

Table 4.- Foreign-Born White Population, Skamania County

Country of Birth	1890	1920	1950
England and Wales.....	17	19	17
Scotland.....	2	2	4
Northern Ireland.....	--	--	--
Ireland (Eire).....	23	4	--
Norway.....	31	47	19
Sweden.....	7	40	26
Denmark.....	--	13	10
Netherlands.....	--	4	--
Switzerland.....	9	27	--
France.....	4	4	5
Germany.....	32	39	24
Poland.....	--	12	5
Czechoslovakia.....	--	--	1
Austria.....	2	12	4
Yugoslavia.....	--	--	--
Russia (U.S.S.R.).....	8	2	4
Finland.....	--	15	8
Italy.....	4	18	6
Canada-French.....	--	5	3
Canada-Other.....	19	32	40
All other countries...	5	28	46
Totals	163	323	222
Percent foreign-born	21.1	13.7	4.6

Source: U. S. Census, Population

Agriculture ranked fifth in employment in 1950, according to the Census. Manufacturing, principally lumbering, ranked first with 537 employed workers

or about one-third of the 1,557 total employed. Agriculture with 172 employed workers had about 11 percent of the work force. Retail and wholesale trade ranked second with 189 workers while miscellaneous services followed with 187. The fourth most important area of employment was construction, with 175 workers during 1950. All other employment, public administration, transportation, forestry and fisheries, and mining were other types of employment ranked in order of importance.

Table 5.- Employment of the Population  
Skamania County, 1950

Types of Employment	Male Workers	Female Workers	Total Workers	Percent of Workers
<u>Total employed workers</u>	1,315	242	1,557	100.0
Agriculture.....	158	14	172	11.0
Forestry and fisheries.....	26	3	29	1.9
Mining.....	6	—	6	.4
Construction.....	173	2	175	11.3
Manufacturing.....	519	18	537	34.5
Transportation.....	55	3	58	3.7
Retail and wholesale stores.....	106	83	189	12.1
Miscellaneous services.....	101	86	187	12.0
Public administration (government employment).....	53	24	77	4.9
Other employment.....	118	9	127	8.2

Source: U. S. Census, Population

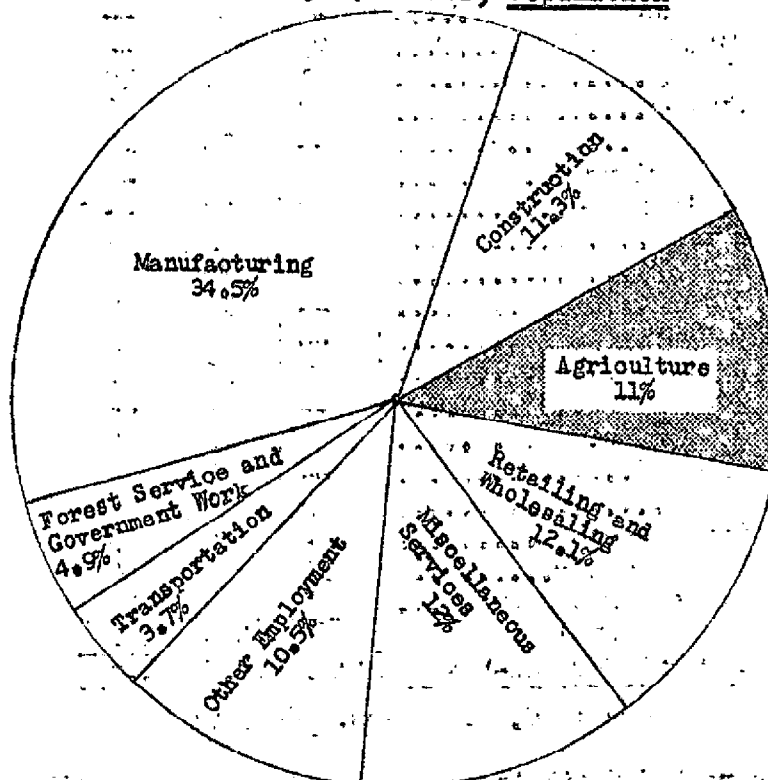


Figure 3.- Agricultural Employment Compared with Other Employment  
in Skamania County, 1950  
(Based on U.S. Census, Population, 1950)